Deſcription of the Country from Lake Superior to Cook's Riv

EXTRACT of a LETTER from *****, of Quebec, to a Friend in London. *(See our Plate I.)*

SIR, *Quebec, Nov.* 7, 1789.

IN my laſt letter I gave you ſome account of the extent of the commerce &c. of this country; and, as I am convinced that common report or eſtimation of diſtances, &c. will not be ſatisfactory to a philoſophic mind, and as, ſince, I have had an opportunity of ſeeing a map or chart of this lately explored country, made by a gentleman of obſervation and ſcience, who has actually traverſed it, and made his map in it, and with whom I have this week had ſeveral converſations, with the map before me; I am able to give you all the ſatisfaction that you wiſh for, excluſive of the map itſelf, which I could not get a copy of, but I hope to ſend it you next Summer.

The following are obſervations that I took from the map. It begins at the upper end of Lake Superior, in lat. 46° 47' North, where there is a *Portage* (or carrying-place) of near nine miles, before you enter the waters communicating to the North-weſt. The Miſſiſippi heads are in the ſame latitude with the head of Lake Superior, about 10 degrees of longitude to the Weſtward of it; and from the portage there is a water-communication to that river, and down it, which is only intercepted by the Falls of St. Anthony. The traders go on this courſe Weſtward, leaving the Miſſiſippi to the Eaſtward 1000 miles, and now go South-weſt down the Miſſiſippi to its mouth. The furs are much ſuperior to thoſe on the North-weſt trading poſts. From the end of the portage at the head of Lake Superior, and the lakes and waters, as high up as lat. 6[illegible] and long. 124°, ſet firſt to the North-weſt and North, and then take a South-eaſtward and South courſe, and empty into York River (Hudſon's Bay). Theſe lakes and rivers are almoſt innumerable, and ſome of them very large; ſuch as the Lake Winipinge, the Lake of the Woods, and others. The mouth of the York River lies in long. 94° Weſt, and lat. 57°. It is an extenſive large river, ſetting nearly Weſt, and is ſupplied by the above lakes and rivers, which fall into it from the North and South. The Hudſon's Bay Company have poſts ſeveral hundred miles Weſt from them, but none to the Northward. Our traders paſs them at one of their poſts, about the lat. 57° and long. 110°. A chain of lakes, &c. continue from ther lat. 56° and long. 124°, whe ſmall *portage*, they enter into lakes that run a North-weſt co empty into other lakes an which all finally communica and empty into, a great lake, Slave Lake, which lies betwee 62° and 63°, being 3 degrees and longitude 122° to 135°, lake is the laſt water before y to the great Northern Ocean in and in long. 132°, and there ebbs and flows, of which the g gave me indubitable proofs. that empty into the great Slave leaſt the largeſt of them, are n Arabaſka (which has a large r ning into Slave Lake, of 3 or 4 leſs in length, its courſe Nor the Lake, or rather the Upper the Woods, or Lake of the Hi being one near Lake Superior) lake extends itſelf near eight longitude, and lies in lat. 6[illegible] Lake Pelican, which is alſo la beſides theſe, there are a numbe lakes. The river that carries waters into the Slave Lake Slave River, and is very large. North-weſt, ſeveral hundred length. From out of the gr Lake runs a very large river, almoſt South-weſt, and has th falls on it in the known world leaſt, near two miles wide w falls are, and an amazing body This river leaves the lake in lat long. 135°, and the falls are 141° —— The great chain of m that extend from Mexico al Weſtern, or Pacific Ocean, Northern Pacific Ocean, termi lat. 6[illegible] and long. 130°; ſo Slave River runs to the Weſt them, and empties into the oce courſe in about lat. 69°. The wood to the Northward of Slav there is only a little low bruſh is filled with a ſpecies of buffal have no tails, but have long ha backs of their thighs and legs reſembles a tail, and they are than the common buffaloes. W have proceeded thus far, and h ed over your map, you will rea jecture what river the above Sl River is known by when it emp the ocean. To ſave you much I will tell you it is Cook's Rive he penetrated upwards of 70

lakes, &c. continue from thence to the lat. 55° and long. 124°, when, with a small *portage*, they enter into rivers and lakes that run a North-weſt courſe, and empty into other lakes and rivers, which all finally communicate with, and empty into, a great lake, called the Slave Lake, which lies between the lat. 62° and 65°, being 3 degrees in width, and longitude 122° to 135°; and this lake is the laſt water before you come to the great Northern Ocean in lat. 68°½, and in long. 132°, and there the water ebbs and flows, of which the gentleman gave me indubitable proofs. The lakes that empty into the great Slave Lake, at leaſt the largeſt of them, are named the Arabaſka (which has a large river running into Slave Lake, of 3 or 400 miles at leaſt in length, its courſe North-weſt), the Lake, or rather the Upper Lake of the Woods, or Lake of the Hills (there being one near Lake Superior); and this lake extends itſelf near eight degrees of longitude, and lies in lat. 60°, and the Lake Pelican, which is alſo large; and beſides theſe, there are a number of ſmall lakes. The river that carries all theſe waters into the Slave Lake is called Slave River, and is very large. It runs North-weſt, ſeveral hundred miles in length. Eaſt of the great Slave Lake runs a very large river, its courſe almoſt South-weſt, and has the largeſt falls on it in the known world; it is, at leaſt, near two miles wide where the falls are, and an amazing body of water. This river leaves the lake in lat. 64° and long. 135°, and the falls are in long. 141° —— The great chain of mountains that extend from Mexico along the Weſtern, or Pacific Ocean, and the Northern Pacific Ocean, terminates in lat. 62° and long. 136°; ſo that the Slave River runs to the Weſtward of them, and empties into the ocean by its courſe in about lat. 69°. There is no wood to the Northward of Slave Lake; there is only a little low bruſh, which is filled with a ſpecies of buffaloes, that have no tails, but have long hair on the backs of their thighs and legs, which reſembles a tail, and they are ſmaller than the common buffaloes. When you have proceeded thus far, and have looked over your map, you will readily conjecture what river the above Slave Lake River is known by when it empties into the ocean. To ſave you much trouble, I will tell you it is Cook's River, which he penetrated upwards of 70 leagues North-

North-eaſtward, as you will ſee by his chart. Cook's River, as he has laid it down in his chart (that is, the mouth of it); is in lat. 59° 40', and long. Weſt 154°. His calculation and laying it down was Eaſt longitude; but if you deduct his Eaſtern longitude from 36°, you will find it to be 154° Weſt. His courſe up the river was North-eaſterly; the courſe of the river out of Slave Lake was South-weſterly. He traverſed his river that courſe near 70 leagues North-eaſterly; and the river out of Slave Lake is known as far South-weſterly: therefore the diſtance to form the junction, or to aſcertain the river to be the ſame, is very ſhort. The mouth of Slave River, at the lake, is in lat. 64°, and long. 134°. The mouth of Cook's River is in lat. 59° 40', and long. 154°. The courſes are North-eaſterly and South-weſterly. The degrees of longitude in that latitude are but little more than 26 miles upon the average to a degree, and the difference of the latitude only about 4 degrees; hence, and as there is no other known vent for the river ſetting out of Slave Lake, nor any other river in that country to the Northward or Southward of Slave Lake, to form ſuch a river as Cook's, there can be little doubt but the ſource of Cook's River is now fully diſcovered and known. There are other proofs that are inconteſtable. Cook found a great quantity of drift-wood on the coaſt. This wood is only found on the banks of the rivers that empty into the Slave Lake. There is no wood to the Northward of the Slave Lake; neither are there any rivers of any ſize, from the near approach of the mountains to the ſea, to the Southward of the lake. The rivers of Arabaſka, Slave, and Mountain Lake, which empty into Slave Lake, are annually twice overflown,—in the month of May, by the breaking-up of the ice; and in the month of Auguſt, by the melting of the ſnow on the mountains. Hence, then, the quantities of drift-wood which Captain Cook met with are accounted for; and theſe could only be launched into the ocean from Cook's River: for, as I have above obſerved, there can be no extenſive river to the Southward of Cook's River, or the river that empties out of Slave Lake, as the great chain of mountains approach to the verge of Slave Lake and River. Another proof is, that the gentleman (from whoſe chart and from whom I have collected the above information) met with two

ard, as you will ſee by his
k's River, as he has laid it
chart (that is, the mouth of
t. 59° 40', and long. Weſt
calculation and laying it
Faſt longitude; but if you
Eaſtern longitude from 36°,
id it to be 154° Weſt. His
e river was North-eaſterly;
f the river out of Slave Lake
weſterly. He traverſed his
ourſe near 70 leagues North-
d the river out of Slave Lake
s far South-weſterly: there-
ance to form the junction,
in the river to be the ſame,
t. The mouth of Slave Ri-
ake, is in lat. 64°, and long.
mouth of Cook's River is in
and long. 154°. The courſes
aſterly and South-weſterly.
s of longitude in that lati-
t little more than 26 miles
verage to a degree, and the
f the latitude only about 4
ance, and as there is no other
for the river ſetting out of
, nor any other river in that
the Northward or Southward
ſe, to form ſuch a river as
re can be little doubt but the
ook's River is now fully diſ-
l known. There are other
me inconteſtable. Cook
at quantity of drift-wood on
This wood is only found on
of the rivers that empty into
ake. There is no wood to
s of the Slave Lake; nei-
are any rivers of any ſize,
the approach of the moun-
e ſea, to the Southward of
The rivers of Arabaſka,
Methye Lake, which empty
e Lake, are annually twice
—in the month of May, by
g-up of the ice; and in the
Auguſt, by the melting of the
e mountains. Hence, then,
ces of drift-wood which Cap-
met with are accounted for;
ould only be launched into
rom Cook's River: for, as
ove obſerved, there can be
e river to the Southward of
er, or the river that empties
e Lake, as the great chain of
approach to the verge of
and River. Another proof
e gentleman (from whoſe
from whom I have collected
information) met with two
Indians, who came (as they ſaid) up a river from the Northern Pacific Ocean all the way to the Slave Lake. They brought him a blanket in 1787, which they received from veſſels which were at the mouth of the river. They ſaid that the river they were in is large to the place of diſcharge, and navigable; ſo that, if we take the latitude and longitude of the two rivers, the courſes, and all the other circumſtances, into conſideration, little doubt remains but that they are the ſame.

In the Northern part of the Slave Lake there was a great quantity of ice on the 15th of July, 1787; and in that year the Indians from that lake penetrated North, and where the waters ebb and flow. At the Northern Ocean they met with and killed a number of the Eſquimaux Indians; which Indians are to be found only on the banks or boundary of the ocean, from the Labrador coaſt Northward, and they are found on the whole extent of that coaſt as far North as we have any knowledge.—— Cook went as far North as 72° or 73°, and was there obſtructed by the ice. He was there in Auguſt. My informant tells me, that, if he had been a month later, he would have met with no obſtruction from ice in that quarter. This I believe; and at the middle of September he might have paſſed the Northern coaſt of America, and have returned to Europe by that route. On the North-weſtern coaſt of America there is a large or long point of land, that extends to the latitude of 71°, or further, and then the coaſt trenches South-eaſterly; ſo that, when you are in long. 128°, the ocean waſhes the land in the latitude of 68°½.

The inferences that I ſhall now draw are,

1. That Lake Superior lies in the firſt range of high lands between this and the Weſtern Ocean, in lat. 46° 47'; and the waters from thence are diſcharged by the rivers St. Lawrence and Miſſiſippi.

2. That the waters to the Weſtward and Northward of that lake, up as high as lat. 58° and long. 124°, diſcharge themſelves, by an Eaſtern courſe, into York River, which empties into Hudſon's Bay.

3 That in lat. 58° lies the great height of land, from whence the waters divide and run Eaſterly and Weſterly; the former into the Atlantic, and the latter into the Pacific Ocean.

4. That the great Slave Lake is the moſt Northerly large piece of water be-

fore

fore you arrive at the Northern Ocean; and that the river which rises from that lake empties into the Northern Pacific Ocean, and is the river that Cook discovered.

3. That an eaſy communication with, and an advantageous commerce, may be carried on by poſts eſtabliſhed on Lakes Slave, Arabaſka, and Pelican, &c. and to deliver the fruits of their commerce at the mouth of Cook's River, to be thence carried to China, &c. &c.; and that, as Cook's River and the lands on Slave Lake, Arabaſka, &c. are very fine, ſome advantageous ſettlements may be made thereon, which may be beneficial to Government.

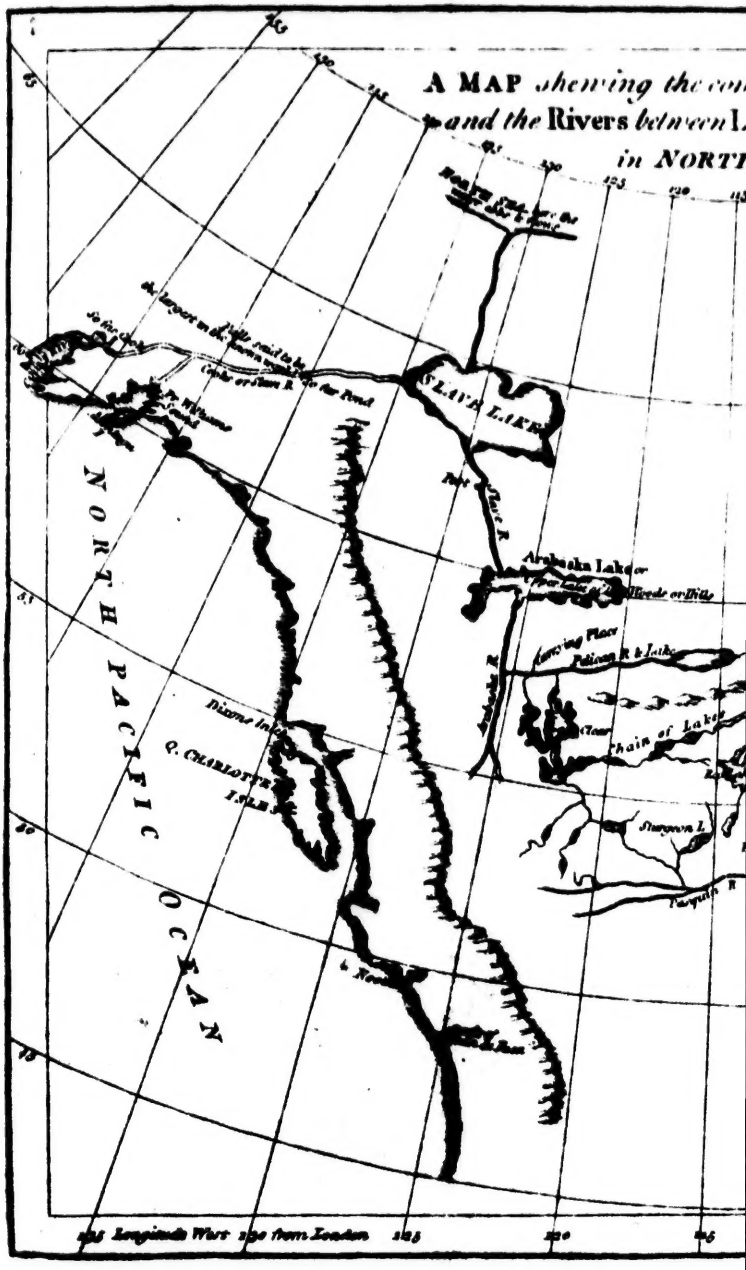
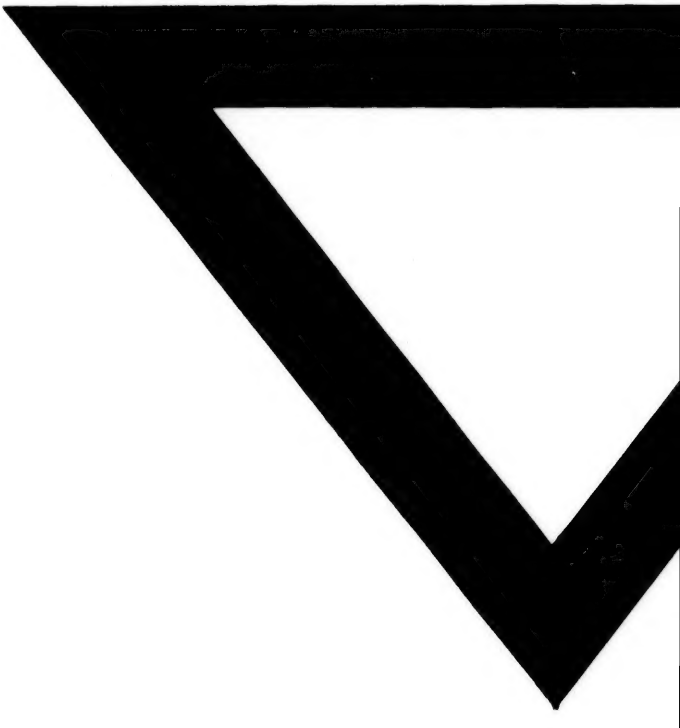
The country about Arabaſka is exceedingly fine, and the climate more moderate than it is here; which is owing to its propinquity to the Weſtern Ocean. The diſtance is not more than 200 leagues, if ſo much, in a Weſt-ſouth-weſtern courſe. We have a poſt there, as we have on the different lakes from Lake Superior to the upper end of Slave Lake. The number of poſts are 21 in that diſtance, where traders are poſted to trade with different tribes of Indians. The diſtance from this town to the head of Lake Superior is 750 leagues, and from the head of Lake Superior to the great Slave Lake is 1000 leagues; in the whole, 1750 leagues.—The perſon from whom I had my information is Peter Pond, who was ſupplied with the proper inſtruments here to take his latitude, and inſtructed fully in the knowledge of aſtronomy, &c. &c. His latitude is undoubtedly right, and his longitude is nearly right. It was taken by ſome perſons ſent from York River, ſeveral hundred miles to the Weſtward of it; and from thence, by the courſes of the rivers and lakes, no great miſtake can be made. Another man, by the name of M'Kenzie, was left by Pond at Slave Lake, with orders to go down the river, and from thence to Unalaſka, and ſo to Kamſkatſka, and thence to England, through Ruſſia, &c. If he meets with no accident, you may have him with you the next year. Yours, &c.

Ocean;
om that
Pacific
ook dif-

on with,
, may be
n Lakes
&c. and
ommerce
er, to be
c.; and
lands on
very fine,
s may be
beneficial

ka is ex-
ate more
ch is ow-
Weſtern
more than
a Weſt-
ve a poſt
ent lakes
er end of
poſts are
aders are
tribes of
this town
or is 750
of Lake
ke is 1000
eagues.—
my infor-
s ſupplied
re to take
ally in the
&c. His
t, and his
was taken
ork River,
Weſtward
the courſes
eat miſtake
an, by the
by Pond at
down the
alaſka, and
e to Eng-
f he meets
have him
ours, &c.

PAM F 5504.1 D2



AP *shewing the communication of the* Lakes
d the Rivers *between* Lake Superior *and* Slave Lake
in NORTH AMERICA.